

AUGUST 8, 1974

Nothing is unpacked except my typewriter. I've just arrived at a town called Cortez, Colo. Three of my sons are in the swimming pool; my wife, "Child Who Sits in the Sun," is shopping.

By fine-focusing the crank of the window in the bathroom, the mountains of the Mesa Verde National Park are visible. Low thunder clouds have been active in the mountain area. It is mighty comfortable to be away from the Shortgrass Country watching mountain rains.

For three days we cut a diagonal line across New Mexico. It's as dry there as you've heard it was. Ground squirrels are working the highways for whatever they can find; cows bed down in the daytime to conserve their strength.

I had a close call passing through the Indian reservations. Child Who Sits in the Sun becomes even more bellicose under a majority position. From Santa Fe on, she was so arrogant that I had to carry my luggage to the room without any help.

While she was sleeping the first morning, I threw her knife away. I knew that she'd be trouble in her people's country. Squawmen can't afford to take the slightest chance.

The tourists are not as plentiful up here as they normally are. However, the new 55 mile an hour speed limit has slowed them down so much that some of them are going to be held over as old crop tourists for next summer.

Every pickup has a camper on it, or so it seems. One of those foreign jobs passed us yesterday packing a dog so big 'that he couldn't poke his head from the back window. How anybody could afford to feed a lap dog in this country is a mystery. I have to edit restaurant orders for my sons, or we'd have had to turn back three days ago. The main attraction of the Mesa Verde Park are the cliff dwellings. People set great store in making long descents and high climbs to see the abandoned cliff houses of a primitive people.

The ruin watching business has been on a steady incline. Archeologists and just plain tourists have done a lot of "ohing" and "ahing" on the cliff sides. But after seeing the ravages of the drouth in the Texas plains and the half empty feedlots, I predict that the ruin business is going to have new competition.

Frankly, I've lost interest in looking for ruins. What sounds appealing to me is something that's going the other way. What I'd like to see is a little roadside hamburger joint made of granite bricks that is clearing about \$10 a day. The past 10 months of the cow game have supplied enough of the ruins atmosphere. Many more months of the same wreck is apt to put a bunch of us to digging for a reason a lot more serious than looking for Indian artifacts.

We had one thrilling experience back at Santa Fe that I must tell you about. A cab driver took us to a restaurant that charges more for hamburger steak than it cost Prince Grace of Monaco to get married. Wine was quoted at \$55 a bottle. The candles on the table cost as much as we were allowing ourselves to spend for breakfast. Folks sitting around the tables were so ritzy that they looked like they might be expecting a canary bird to perch on their noses.

After we'd looked at the menu, I told the waiter that the altitude change had ruined our appetites. He suggested a brandy cocktail; I suggested that he call a cab before

I had to use a napkin knot to rework one of his eyelids. Child Who Sits in the Sun and the boys made an awful noisy departure. I tried to find a toothpick so all those rich folks would think we'd already eaten, but they didn't have any in sight. People sure looked at us in a funny way. Nevertheless, when I join the New Mexico Restaurant Assn., I want more than a credit card receipt to show for the expense.

It sure was sad to pass through all those dried up farms and ranches. I'm going to relax as long as I can. Newspapers in Colorado don't carry the Texas weather report, so at least for a few days I can think of something else.

The next time I see any of you in private, I'll drop the name of the restaurant. Until then, watch your cab drivers close in a tourist resort. Our margin is already too short as it is.